

NEWSLETTER

April 2013

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Join us.

Please note:

There will be NO meeting in April because of Anzac Day.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 23 May 2013

Editorial

The evidence is in - will action follow?

The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs has all the evidence and clues that it needs to make a paradigm shift from the old war on drugs approach.

Those clues are contained in the opening remarks at the 56th session by Yury Fedotov published later in this newsletter. Note the following elements in his speech: that downward trends (of plant based narcotics) are offset by increases in synthetic drugs; and that the founding principles of drug conventions were created to protect the health and welfare of mankind and calls for a balanced approach.

The take away messages from the speech are:

- the number of countries that are producing plant based narcotics has decreased but synthetics are increasing;
- the rhetoric is about protecting health and welfare of mankind but more than 500 are dying throughout the world each day from drugs and for those who survive widespread stigma and discrimination prevails;
- Fedotov says they must ask themselves the tough questions about their effectiveness but their answer seems to be applying more of the same.

The comment about alternative development for farmers may be good in theory but in practice it has failed many times over. A recent case of persuading Afghan farmers to grow cotton instead of opium has ended in a loss for the farmer whose only alternative for supporting his family was to resort to opium growing. Estimates indicate that opium production in that country is increasing.

Somehow there is a disconnect between the evidence and changes to approaches adopted. Doing what has been done before is the easy option irrespective of the effectiveness. Many languish in prison because of problematic drug use when they should be receiving some form of health treatment.

The balance of funding for law enforcement vs health continues to be the wrong way around. The White House budget devotes 58 percent of drug-control spending to punishment and interdiction. US state budgets would of course be much higher and in Australia it is around 75 percent.

However in New Zealand a different approach is being tried for synthetics. It is a regulation approach that requires new synthetics to be proven to be safe or low-risk before they can be sold. An approach that is well worth watching. An approach worth watching and perhaps an approach worth considering for Australia.

Back home here in Australia the Alcohol and Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) has a new president, Dr Mal Washer, MP, who is no newcomer to drug and alcohol issues and well understands the issues involved.

ADCA is the non-government national peak body representing the interests of the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector. Established in 1966, it provides a voice for those who work to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

Dr Washer is clear on what the evidence on our current approach to drug and alcohol issues says, he supports decriminalisation and is keen to get action that must follow.

If he can mobilise that organisation and its supporting member organisations we can look forward to improvements in illicit drug policies.

Opening remarks at the 56th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Yury Fedotov, Director-General/Executive Director, Vienna, 11 March 2013

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 56th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs comes at an important moment.

It is one year before the high level review of the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, which will be followed by the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2016.

In this process, the CND has a primary institutional role to play in defining the international drug control system of the 21st Century.

Illicit drugs and crime are roadblocks to the rule of law, and to democracy. They represent a clear threat to the stability and security of entire regions and to economic and social development. In so many ways, illicit drugs and crime and development are bound to each other. If countries are denied the rule of law and justice, development is jeopardised.

And societies weakened by the lack of sustainable development can become the staging areas for the criminal networks. We, therefore, need to break this destructive cycle in order to promote

greater security and stability.

The CND has the knowledge, experience and commitment to provide the international community with a roadmap to confront these threats and challenges.

In December last year, UNGA unanimously adopted Resolution 67/193 “International Cooperation against the World Drug Problem”.

The resolution reaffirmed the relevance of the Political Declaration and the Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

We need to follow the road map provided by this resolution, which emphasizes the importance of both the universality of the three international drug conventions, as well as their effective implementation.

Many countries around the world are suffering due to the impact of illicit drugs and crime.

I want to assure you that we are doing everything possible to provide effective and efficient assistance to those in need, whether in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries or Central America or West Africa.

We are introducing regional and country programmes that deliver assistance where it is needed, We are building strong partnerships with other UN agencies, and promoting political commitment at the highest international levels, particularly in the post 2015 development agenda.

To achieve this, we are strengthening links among regional and thematic programmes.

The application of these approaches has led to successes in the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, as well as the Country Programme.

We are supporting bodies such as CARICC [Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors], and the Triangular Initiative to share information and experience, as well as to conduct joint operations. Our work is vital in West and Central Asia. 2014 is approaching. We must be ready to provide greater assistance to Afghanistan and its people.

There are also new initiatives for the region such as the illicit financial flows programme and one specifically designed to interrupt drug trafficking by sea.

A programme for South Eastern Europe has also been launched focusing on the “Balkan Route” for Afghan heroin.

In West Africa, a new UNODC threat assessment for the region shows that illicit drugs and crime continue to create instability.

Illicit trafficking, especially in amphetamine-type-stimulants is also growing in South East Asia. UNODC is working closely with Myanmar as it broadens its international engagement.

In Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean now have a UNODC regional hub in Panama. Mexico and Brazil also have re-profiled and upgraded offices.

Our Aircop and Global Container Control Programme, co-managed with the World Customs Organization, are moving forward. The Container Control Programme is now in more than 30 Joint Port Control Units around the world.

UNODC’s Global Programme on Money Laundering is assisting law enforcement agencies and financial intelligence bodies to sever the arteries that feed the criminal networks.

These achievements were only made possible due to the strong support of donors. I thank every one of these countries for their assistance. This continued support is a sign of the trust that the international community has in our work.

However, we must also ask ourselves tough questions about whether we have managed to reduce the global drug threat. There are no easy answers.

Quoting again from GA Resolution 67/193, “the world drug problem continues to constitute a serious threat to public health and safety, and well-being of humanity, in particular children and young people and their families. It also threatens the national security and sovereignty of states and undermines socio-economic and political stability and sustainable development.”

There is no doubt that the drug conventions help to contain and stabilise the levels of drugs consumption.

Global opium production, for example, fell by some 80 per cent from the early 20th Century; at the same time, the global population quadrupled.

In recent decades, there have been declines in the production and consumption of cocaine, and the majority of opium cultivation and production is now localised in a single country.

However, these trends are offset by the increase around the world of synthetic drugs, as well as new psychoactive substances. The overall prevalence of drug use is not decreasing. Illicit drugs kill more than five hundred men, women and even children every day.

Alternative development is crucial. There can be no successful eradication without complementary alternative development projects for farmers.

For many years, UNODC has been building capacities in the area of food security and offering technical assistance.

The task, however, is enormous. True success will only come with the commitment and involvement of every international partner.

Knowledge is a first step towards action. I call on all countries to keep providing us with detailed data on drugs and crime.

But, if we are really determined to confront illicit drugs, we must move with more determination to address the demand side.

Such an approach is a return to the founding principles of the drug conventions that were created specifically to protect the health and welfare of mankind.

It also calls for a balanced approach to deliver real solutions to those in need and to reduce the health and social consequences of drug abuse.

In the spirit of the drug conventions, UNODC works to deliver

Membership Renewal

Thank you for those who have renewed.

Members who have yet to renew you can pay by cheque, money order, stamps (60c stamps please), or by direct debit. Details for direct debit are outlined in our last Newsletter.

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In the spirit of the drug conventions, UNODC works to deliver

prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

We are releasing at the CND International Standards on Drug Use Prevention to offer guidance on policies and interventions that can prevent drug use and promote healthy lifestyles, particularly among young people.

UNODC is also working hard to meet the threat of New Psychoactive Substances and we will present a new technical study on this issue at the session.

In 2012 we made notable progress in improving equitable access to HIV services for people who inject drugs.

And yet, HIV transmission through injecting drug use continues to be one of the main unresolved challenges of the international community. Widespread stigma, discrimination and lack of access to evidence-informed HIV services are among the key challenges.

I am fully committed to reaching the 2011 UNGASS target. We know what needs to be done.

And let me be clear: human rights and public health considerations must be at the core of international response to drug use and to HIV.

Building synergies between our approaches to law, health and alternative development is a necessity.

All of these activities must also be reinforced by a sense of shared responsibility, which we should never allow to be weakened.

Thank you.

White House budget would fund drug punishment over treatment

Lucia Graves, Huffington Post, 10 April 2013

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/10/white-house-budget-drug-punishment_n_3055760.html

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration budget released Wednesday emphasizes drug abuse punishment and interdiction over treatment and prevention, despite recent rhetoric from the Office of National Drug Control Policy on a "21st century" approach.

The White House budget proposal for fiscal 2014 devotes 58 percent of drug-control spending to punishment and interdiction, compared with 42 percent to treatment and prevention. The drug control spending ratio in this year's budget is even more lopsided, 62 percent to 38 percent.

"The administration deserves some credit for moving this ratio slightly in the right direction over the years, but a drug control budget that increases funding for the DEA and the Bureau of Prisons is simply not the kind of strategy we need in the 21st century," said Marijuana Majority spokesman Tom Angell. "At a time when a majority of Americans support legalizing marijuana, and states are moving to end prohibition, this president should be spending less of our money paying narcs to send people to prison, not more. If, as administration officials say, 'We can't arrest our way out of the drug problem,' then why are they continuing to devote so many resources to arresting people for drug problems?"

The White House says on its website that it wants more spending for treatment and prevention — \$10.7 billion — than for federally-funded domestic drug law enforcement and incarceration — \$9.6

billion. But this figure leaves out funding for international and interdiction efforts, buried further down in the report.

The White House proposes to spend \$3.7 billion on interdiction - intercepting and disrupting shipments of illegal drugs and their precursors - as well as \$1.4 billion for drug-control outside the U.S.

Reformers praised the White House for seeking to cut to the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, which critics have argued gives incentives to local law enforcement officials to make more drug arrests. The White House requested \$193 million for the program, down from \$240 million a year earlier.

"Still," Angell said, "\$193 million for the program is \$193 million more than should be used to arrest people for drugs in the 21st century."

Intelligence Squared Debate Is it OK for athletes to use performance enhancing drugs?

This debate will take place on **May 9th** at the City Recital Hall at Angel Place. It will be broadcast on the BBC reaching an audience in excess of 60 million people. An event that promises to get the heart rate up without the exercise.

Book tickets online at cityrecitalhall.com or call City Recital Hall Angel Place Box Office on 02 8256 2222.

Cost: \$32, concessions available.

The outstanding speakers lined up are as follows:

FOR:

Julian Savulescu; Director of the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics at Oxford University in the UK.

Dr Robin Willcourt a Regenerative and Sports Medicine specialist in the USA.

AGAINST:

Shane Gould MBE, Olympic Gold Medalist, who's heritage is one of the world's greatest female swimmers

Our final speaker will be announced soon, most likely a ministerial representative or from a Sporting Institution.

You can find speakers' biographies at <http://www.iq2oz.com/Sydney-May-9th>

For more info visit iq2oz.com.

New Zealand's Psychoactive Substances Bill a 'game-changer'

Tuesday, 26 February 2013

According to NZ's Associate Health Minister Peter Dunne the Psychoactive Substances Bill introduced to Parliament today will mean legal highs have to be proved safe or low risk before they can be sold.

"It is about moving from constantly playing catch-up with this industry on each new product they produce, to reversing the onus of proof – now they will have to prove every product is safe before it goes on sale," Mr Dunne said. "This legislation will clean up what has been a highly irresponsible legal highs industry to date. Producers of products such as synthetic cannabis and party pills will no longer be able to play with the health of young New Zealanders."

The law is expected to be in place by August to replace the current temporary class drug notices regime, which has taken more than 30 substances and 50 products off the market.

The Bill will include provisions for:

A regulatory authority within the Health Ministry to

- consider and approve or decline psychoactive substances
- issue a manufacturing code of practice
- issue importation, manufacturing and sale licences
- conduct post-marketing monitoring, audit and recall functions
- establish an expert advisory committee to provide the authority with technical advice
- set offences and penalties under the Bill, including up to two years' imprisonment for some offences, and fines of up to \$500,000
- restrict sale of products to those under 18, and place restrictions and prohibitions on places of sale; and
- establish an appeals committee.

Free drug & alcohol public forum

Exciting drug & alcohol public forum debate organised by naturopath and registered nurse Max Hacker. New ideas to tackle drug & alcohol problems in our society. 19:00 till 20:30 on Tuesday 30th April at Sydney University Nursing School, 88 Mallett St., Camperdown.

Esteemed panel:

- Dr Alex Wodak, Emeritus Consultant and leader in drug and alcohol reform
- Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, member of the legislative council
- Superintendent Frank Hansen, New South Wales Police Force
- Jane Sanders, principal solicitor of the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre
- Jay Bacik, CEO Life Education NSW
- Professor John Saunders, Professor and consultant physician in internal medicine and addiction medicine.

Special guests: Vince Coyte: Aboriginal health. Gary Christian from Drug Free Australia. Addiction specialists Dr Mark Hardy and Dr Robert Graham.

Video comments from Professor David Nutt British psychiatrist, neuropsychopharmacologist, and chair of Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs

Event totally free of charge.

Sales of synthetic drugs are on a high

Mark Morri and Ian Walker, The Sunday Telegraph, April 14, 2013 12:00AM

It was a massive haul - 40,000 packets of synthetic cannabis. But police didn't even know if they could charge the owners.

The powder, which is usually diluted with nail polish remover, sprayed on to dried leaf then put in 1g, 3g or 7g sealed bags and sold through Sydney shops as a legal high, was seized in the western suburbs in October.

What followed was an agonising wait as investigators worked through a canon of laws where the line between what is legal and illegal is constantly shifting.

Finally, on Tuesday, two men aged 28 and 30, were charged with two counts of large commercial drug supply and dealing with the proceeds of crime in relation to the seizure of 7kg of raw synthetic powder and more than 100kg of packaged, synthetic cannabis.

The drug squad is locked in a chemical war against the rising tide of synthetic drugs - including fake cocaine and LSD - being sold throughout the state as legitimate.

Detective Superintendent Nick Bingham said the problem of synthetic drugs that mimicked the effects of cannabis and cocaine emerged about three years ago.

"When this became a bigger issue nationally about two years ago, the government moved pretty quickly and banned seven substances," Supt Bingham said.

The move had little effect and, in fact, made the problem worse.

"In an 18-month period from July 8 to December last year, 334 synthetic cannabis products and 344 other synthetics we call novel psychoactive substances, which include 'bath salts', have been banned. A substance can be outlawed on Friday and the next week a chemist, normally in China or New Zealand, 'tweaks' a molecule or two and the composition is different to the banned substance."

In the past two years police and hospitals have seen increasing numbers of people suffering severe psychotic episodes as a result of synthetic highs. Supt Bingham said some may be "legal but lethal".

Just two weeks ago an 18-year-old girl was found roaming naked through the streets of Kirribilli with a 19-year-old male. Both appeared to be in a psychotic rage.

"One of the symptoms of these synthetic drugs is people's bodies overheat and they need to remove their clothes to try to cool down," Supt Bingham said.

In October last year truck driver Glenn Punch was found running around naked near an industrial site in the Hunter region. He collapsed and later died in hospital. His girlfriend was found partly naked in his truck nearby in a critical condition, but survived. Both had injected a synthetic drug of uncertain legal status.

A report on synthetic drugs from a parliamentary inquiry last year is due for release within months.

"Right now there's no way of knowing what's in the product you are getting. What sort of damage is being done in the long term is still unknown," Supt Bingham said.

Bumper Sticker

One of our members sent in this bumper sticker. Members can buy it from <http://www.zazzle.com.au/drug+prohibition+gifts>. FFDLR is also considering buying some for distribution.

