

Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities, January - March 2015



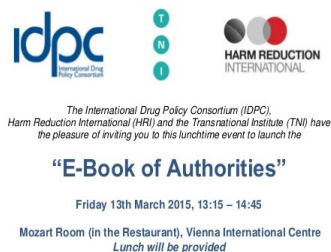
With the [2016 UNGASS](#) on drugs in one year, it is time to recognize the policy landscape is shifting while tensions within the UN drug control system continue to grow. A slowly increasing number of governments is expressing their frustrations with the current [international drug control framework](#), particularly Mexico and Colombia, countries that are suffering from violence related to drug markets, are calling for reflection and analysis in order to consider new options, some of which include regulatory measures.

But although some battles are won, the majority of countries do not openly call for change. However, [the 58th CND](#) did show a change of discourse: the use of harm reduction and human rights language was no longer a taboo and several delegations emphasized the need for more focus on health and development. Another positive development at the CND was the unprecedented amount of time allocated to NGOs to take the floor and address the Commission plenary. TNI staff took the opportunity and delivered three interventions.

An important issue on this year's CND agenda was the [Chinese proposal to schedule Ketamine](#) under UN conventions because of risks of Ketamine abuse. Ketamine is an essential anaesthetic especially used in developing countries, WHO warned that scheduling Ketamine would limit the availability and “would lead to a public health crisis”. TNI, in cooperation with WHO and various NGOs, played a pivotal role in the [advocacy efforts to prevent Ketamine scheduling](#). We are happy to report that after hefty negotiations the CND decided to postpone the decision on scheduling Ketamine.

EVENTS

Community Consultation Workshop on Legal Reform of Narcotic Laws in Myanmar, 25-27 March, co-hosted in collaboration with the National Drug User Network-Myanmar and [Burnet Institute](#). Tom Kramer and Nang Pann Ei represented TNI in this workshop and moderated some of the sessions.



[Side event for the launching of the “E-Book of Authorities”](#), *March 13th*, a civil society led project to catalogue agreed UN statements and language on a selection of key topics. It aims to show the extent of existing international supported wording for evidence-based drug policies, and can be used in international drug policy discussions and (UN) negotiations. Martin Jelsma gave a presentation on the purposes of the [Book of Authorities](#).



[Drug policy innovation in the Americas](#), *March 12th*, Side event co-organised with IDPC, WOLA, and Colectivo de Estudios Drogas y Derecho [CEDD](#). Tom Blickman gave a presentation on cannabis policy developments. Pien Metaal addressed the plenary on [Alternative Development: Conditioning Alternative Development to previous eradication](#) should be abandoned. During the CND Metaal also actively participated to the [Civil Society Task Force](#) which has been set up by the Vienna NGO Committee in

preparation of the UNGASS 2016. Pien Metaal has been elected as the representative of the [farmers of prohibited crops](#). In the coming year she will be liaising with farmers in Asia, Latin America and Africa and aim to include their interests in the UNGASS preparations.



Plenary Session, March 11th, Martin delivered a [TNI Statement](#) in favour of a wide ranging and open debate that considers all options for UNGASS-2016 including UN treaty reform.

[The 2016 UNGASS: challenges and opportunities](#), March 9th, Side-event organized together with the Governments of Mexico, the

Netherlands, Uruguay, and the International Drug Policy Consortium.

For a summary of all TNI activities in Vienna, [see this summary](#).

[IISS Cartagena Dialogue](#), March 6 – 8, Tom Kramer spoke at the inaugural of the The Trans-Pacific Summit on the issue of "[Insurgency, drugs and security: Lessons learned from Latin America and Asia](#)".



Workshop to review Myanmar's 1993 Narcotics Drugs and sychotropic Substances Law, February 16-20, Tom Kramer and consultant Nang Pann Ei Kham actively participated in 4-day workshop organised by Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC-Myanmar govt), UNAIDS and UNODC to review Myanmar's 1993 Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. TNI also facilitated the participation of representatives of local NGOs (Myanmar Drug User Network and Myanmar Anti-

Narcotics Association) to participate, and coordinated a presentation by the Drug Policy Advocacy Group in Myanmar (initiated by TNI). Our publication [Towards a Healthier Legal Environment. A Review of Myanmar's Drug Laws](#) was extremely useful for participants, as after a day of presentations the workshop went into detailed discussion from article to article. In the end, in the new draft law drug use itself (proven by urine tests etc) is no longer punishable with imprisonment but police may refer drug users to treatment centres after being caught three times; possession for personal used would also no longer be criminalised but people can also be referred to treatment. However, needle possession is still criminalised (though police are instructed to not actively implement) and death penalty for serious drug related offences still in place (though no executions have been carried out in the past 25 years). Yet it was a very frank and open discussion with participants from CCDAC, all relevant ministries, UNAIDS and UNODC, and a number of local and international NGOs.

International Expert Seminar: Towards UNGASS 2016, February 13-14, Tom Blickman participated in this seminar on new trends in drug policies and drug legislation in Italy and Europe, organised by our partner, [Forum DROGHE](#). Blickman made the presentation: “[UNGASS 2016 on the world drug problem](#)”. The seminar discussed new trends in drug policies and drug legislation in Italy and in Europe. After the abolition in 2014 of the repressive 2006 Italian drug legislation people who have been imprisoned for small drug offences (possession for personal use) should be released. The seminar further discussed the role Italy might play in the preparation for the 2016 UNGASS on drugs.



Opening of a cannabis exhibition at Casa Bertold Brecht in Montevideo, February 11 – Martin Jelsma took part in the opening of the exhibition, with the participation also of the [Hemp Museum in Amsterdam/Barcelona](#), funder of part of our cannabis publication and whose materials we were allowed to use as illustrations for the history sections in the report. Led to half hour [interview with Jelsma on Radio Uruguay](#) next morning.

Informal Drug Policy Dialogue, Uruguay, February 9 – Pien Metaal chaired a closed meeting with government officials and experts, organised by TNI, WOLA, JND (the Uruguayan national drug agency) and FES ([Friedrich Ebert Stiftung](#)). The subject of the Dialogue: New Approaches for the 21st century. The event was held in Montevideo just before [COPOLAD](#) [a partnership cooperation programme between the European Union and Latin America] and [EU-CELAC](#) [the Community of Latin America and Caribbean states] high level meetings on drug policies, both also in Montevideo.

Opportunities for Development-Oriented Drug Control in Myanmar’, Nay Pyi Taw 21 & 22 January 2015. Organised and co-hosted by CCDAC & TNI. Martin Jelsma talked on Alternative Development, the position of Burma in the global drug policy debate, and about the drugs & peace process in Colombia. Tom Kramer talked about the role of Alternative Development in the peace process. TNI also facilitated the presence of representatives from opium growing communities, the first time opium farmers were able to participate in such a high-level policy meeting with the Myanmar government. In Nay Pyi Taw, 23 January, TNI held a "closed informal workshop met CCDAC on the review of the Myanmar drug control laws. In preparation of this workshop we drafted [a document reviewing the current Myanmar drug law](#).

Agenda for the 2016 Drugs UNGASS: [Ensuring meaningful Civil Society participation](#), January 16, United Nations Headquarters, New York City. Martin Jelsma attended this event to promote a diverse and comprehensive agenda towards the 2016 Special Session, including meaningful participation within the official agenda.

2016 Drugs UNGASS Strategy Meeting, 12-14 January, New York City. Martin Jelsma participated in a three days closed meeting to brainstorm among civil society representatives about common objectives and strategies for the UNGASS; he presented at a panel on learning from past UN meetings which included guest speakers who had worked on previous UNGASS events, as well as UN ambassadors of member states, who shared their political insights.

PUBLICATIONS

[The ketamine controversy, continued](#). UN legal opinion adds confusion while China changes its scheduling proposal – *March 6th, 2015* - Article by Martin Jelsma

[El llamado a votación de la ONU sobre la Ketamina podría provocar una crisis de Salud Pública en los Países Desarrollados](#), *March 10, 2015* - Article by Martin Jelsma on [TalkingDrugs](#).

TNI and a coalition of partners (IDPC, Harm Reduction International) launched the E-tool, “**[E-Book of Authorities](#)**”, a catalogue with agreed UN statements and language on a selection of topics, to show the extent of existing international support for evidence-based drug policies. *March 13, 2015*.

[Fact Sheet on the Proposal to Discuss International Scheduling of Ketamine at the 58th CND](#), co-written by Martin Jelsma. This Fact Sheet has been signed by more than forty medical and civil society organisations from around the world. Fact Sheet voices concern about the proposal of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to schedule ketamine as a Schedule I substance under the International Convention on Psychotropic Substances. (Also in Spanish and French). *February 27, 2015*.

[Reguleer wiet, en niet alleen de achterdeur](#). Een zorgvuldige nieuwe wetgeving zou eigen teelt, cannabis clubs en coffeeshops met gereguleerde achterdeur mogelijk moeten maken – Blog on the Dutch cannabis policy, by Tom Blickman. *February 25, 2015*.



[CND decision to schedule ketamine would undermine WHO treaty mandate](#), Article by Martin Jelsma, *February 16, 2015*.

[Towards a Healthier Legal Environment. A Review of Myanmar's Drug Laws](#) – Special Report, *February 2015*.

[Fixing a broken system. Modernizing drug law enforcement in Latin America](#) - Series on Legislative Reform of Drug Policies

No. 29, Together with IDPC. (Also in Spanish and Portuguese)

[Cannabis policy reform in Europe . Bottom up rather than top down](#). Series on Legislative Reform of Drug Policies No. 28. – (Also in German and Spanish)

[Time for a wake-up call: An historical and ethnographic approach to the regulation of plant-based stimulants](#) - Series on Legislative Reform of Drug Policies No. 27. (Also in Portuguese and Spanish)

[Urban drug markets and zones of impunity in Colombia](#) - Briefing Series on Drug Markets and Violence Nr 2. (Also in Spanish)

[The International Drug Control Regime and Access to Controlled Medicines](#), Series on Legislative Reform of Drug Policies No. 26, Together with IDPC. (Also in Spanish and French).

IN THE MEDIA

Martin Jelsma was quoted in [Labour's 'appalling gutter politics' on drugs](#), *New Statement (UK)*, March 31st.

TNI provided information and was quoted at this EFE article, [La ONU ante una mayor flexibilidad con las drogas](#), which was reproduced by different Spanish media. *La Vanguardia*, March 17th.

TNI was quoted on the role of Latin American countries as a force pushing for drug policy reform. Articles were published in several Spanish and Latin American newspapers, for example in *Página 12 (Argentina)*: [Otro paradigma para el debate](#). And in *Diario Libre (Uruguay)*: [América Latina lidera las voces que piden cambiar la estrategia antidrogas](#).

TNI was quoted in this *BBC* article: Ketamine: [Why not everyone wants a ban](#), 13 March, 2015. and in *VICE News* (English and Dutch): [China's War on Drugs Could Deprive Developing Countries of Ketamine](#)

- [Als China z'n zin krijgt komen ontwikkelingslanden zonder ketamine te zitten](#)



TNI new report on Burma "[Towards a Healthier Legal Environment: A Review of Myanmar Drug Laws](#)" has been widely quoted in: [Myanmar's efforts to review drug laws welcomed](#), at *The Nation*, March 4th.

[Report Illustrates Dynamics of Colombia's Domestic Drug Trade](#), *InSightCrime*, February 25, 2015.

[Think tank welcomes Myanmar's illegal drug law review](#), February

2015

[Marijuana activists push legalization of medical cannabis in Costa Rica](#), *Tico Times*, February 24, Pien Metaal was quoted about medical cannabis.

An interview with Pien Metaal with AFP about cannabis regulation in Latin America, [Legal marijuana takes root in Latin America](#), was picked up by several media outlets amongst others the [Yahoo news](#)

In March a radio interview with Pien Metaal by AFP about the impact of the INCB report was broadcasted in radio news outlet all over Latin America and the Caribbean.

The briefing on [Cannabis policy reform in europe](#) was quoted in [Why is Europe refusing to change course on drugs?](#), *Politico.co.uk*, February 4th.

[Es muy probable que en pocos años más países legalicen marihuana](#), interview with Martin Jelsma in *Radio Uruguay*.

[The Irrawaddy: Shan State poppy farmers say raw opium prices in slow decline](#) — *Kyaw Myo Tun*, 15 Jan 2015.

Tom Kramer was quoted in a *New York Times* video and article: [Myanmar Returns to What Sells: Heroin](#) - Also published by *NRC*: [Kijken: deze arme boeren produceren heroïne op de velden van Myanmar](#), 6 January 2014.

The [National Ecuadorian Drug Agency CONSEP](#) will be reproducing in their monthly magazine, both in the digital and printed versions, some chapters of "[Rise and Decline](#)" (the cannabis briefing). This is part of their strategy to start preparing the country for regulating cannabis.

Our monthly column in Cádiz magazine (Barcelona)

- La Doctrina Brownfield, el palo en la rueda de la reforma
- Cannabis, cocaína y delincuencia en Santa Lucía (Caribe)"
- Narcomenudeo y zonas de impunidad en Colombia

Coming up the next quarter

Events:

- Informal Drug Policy Dialogue in San Jose (Puerto Rico) (first time in the Caribbean), 23-25 April. Pien Metaal, Martin Jelsma and Tom Blickman will be attending the meeting.

- 9th Annual Conference of the [ISSDP](#): Ghent 20-22 May 2015. Tom Blickman and Martin Jelsma will participate in panels on cannabis policy trends and Europe's role in the 2016 UNGASS.

Publications:

- First draft global tendencies prisons populations (CEDD)
- Impacts of the drug legislation in Burma
- Advocacy Note: Drug law reform in Myanmar
- Brookings Institution publication on Improving Global Drug Policy will include a paper by Martin Jelsma on Prospects for drug policy reform at the 2016 UNGASS. Presentations are scheduled for Bogota and Washington, D.C., in April and in London in June.