

# Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities

NEWSLETTER

January – March 2013



The most remarkable event of the first quarter of 2013 on drug policy and drug law reforms was definitely the [readmission of Bolivia](#) in the [UN Single Convention of 1961](#). On January 11, 2013, most Parties to the Convention chose [not to object](#) to the reservation requested by Bolivia over its traditional uses of coca leaf. Of the 183 countries, only 15 objected to the reservation.

This is undoubtedly an important step not only in the international acceptance of a plant considered sacred by some Andean peoples, but in the process of amending the outdated UN conventions. It is also remarkable that for the first time in the framework of the [Commission on Narcotic Drugs \(CND\) in Vienna](#) in March, four countries (Guatemala, Argentina, Czech Republic and Uruguay) mentioned the possibility of revising the international drug treaties.

*"Bolivia's reservation for coca resolves the major juridical conflict between the Treaty of 1961 and the country's constitution and indigenous rights in general "*

Martin Jelsma

## EVENTS

*January 10*, **Martin Jelsma** attended a Dialogue between Dutch NGOs and several Dutch ministries to discuss international Dutch policy regarding different issues, drugs among them.



As a member of the [OAS-CICAD](#) Organization of American States / Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission) scenario team, **Martin Jelsma** attended in *January 21/26* and again in *March 4/8* and discussed various drug policy scenarios for the American hemisphere in Panama City.

*February 6-8*, **Martin Jelsma** participated in the conference [Global Drug and Development Policy](#), at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.

TNI supported the ‘Drug Abuse and Addiction Awareness Forum’ organized by Metta Foundation in Kachin State capital, Myitkyina on 8 and 9 February 2013. **Tom Kramer** invited local staff from the Burnett Institute and the Asia Harm Reduction Network (AHRN) to speak at the forum to promote more space for harm reduction interventions in Kachin State. TNI will take a lead in following up on this later in 2013, in cooperation with key local organisations. [More info](#).

TNI organised together with [Diogenis Association](#) and the National Polish Drug Bureau an Informal Drug Policy Dialogue, in Warsaw, 14-16 February. This meeting was part of our EC project on new approaches in drug policy and interventions (co-funded by OSF). [Read more](#).

**Tom Blickman** and **Martin Jelsma** participated at the debate [Who is winning "the war on drugs"?](#) about the global context of drug policy. The debate was organized by Krytyka Polityczna in Warsaw on 13 February 2013. (See also [interviews](#) with Blickman and Jelsma



Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs - meeting on Khat, London February 25. **Martin Jelsma** spoke on the negative impacts of the ban of khat in the Netherlands. [See TNI Policy Brief on khat](#).

March 11-15, CND in Vienna. TNI co-organised with IDPC two side events:

- [Cannabis and the 1961 Convention](#)
- [The Latin America agenda for drug policy reform](#)

Both events were well attended by government officials and NGO representatives.

## PUBLICATIONS

[Analysis of objections to Bolivia's reservation to allow coca chewing in the UN conventions](#), Tom Blickman, 4 January 2013

[The illicit drugs market in the Colombian agrarian context- Why the issue of illicit cultivation is highly relevant to the peace process](#), Amira Armenta, TNI Drug Policy Briefing Nr. 40, February 2013 Drug Policy Briefing (Also in Spanish)

[Entre realidad y abstracción - Principios rectores y alternativas al desarrollo en zonas de cultivos ilícitos en el Perú](#), Mirella van Dun, Hugo Cabieses Cubas y Pien Metaal, Informe sobre políticas de drogas No. 39, Enero de 2013.

*Articles for “[Cáñamo](#)” Magazine (Barcelona):*

- Principios rectores del Desarrollo Alternativo - Reflexiones después de la Conferencia Internacional sobre Desarrollo Alternativo (ICAD) en Lima, Pien Metaal

- Los CAMAD de Bogotá. Los centros de atención médica a drogodependientes, una práctica de reducción de daños. Julián Quintero
- La victoria de Bolivia respecto a la hoja de coca. Un ejemplo positivo de cómo se podrían modernizar las convenciones de drogas de la ONU. Martin Jelsma

## IN THE MEDIA

[Wij zijn schijnheilig over cocakauwen. Nederland is tegen het kauwen op cocabladeren in Bolivia.](#) (OpEd) Martin Jelsma, Tom Blickman, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 januari 2013

[Schijnheilig bezwaar van Nederland tegen het kauwen van coca bladeren](#)

Tom Blickman was quoted on the experimentation with cannabis in different countries of Europe, in *The Economist*, [Winding down the war on drugs. Towards a ceasefire.](#) Experiments in legalisation are showing what a post-war approach to drug control could look like. February 23rd, 2013.

Martin Jelsma was quoted in *MercoPress (Montevideo)*, South Atlantic News Agency, Monday, January 14th 2013, on the objections some few countries presented to the reinsertion of Bolivia in the Convention. [Major victory for President Morales: UN accepts “coca leaf chewing” in Bolivia](#)

Martin Jelsma was quoted again on Bolivia in *Los Andes (Argentina)*, sábado, 12 de enero de 2013, [La ONU acepta el mascado de coca.](#)

Tom Kramer was quoted in *Time magazine*, Obstacles ahead in Burma’s opium war, 19 March 2013: [“The root cause is poverty. Access to health, education — if this is not addressed, you will not solve the problem.”](#)

Tom Blickman was quoted in the Mexican Newspaper *Reforma*, [Tolera Europa uso de drogas](#) on the European tendency towards a regulated market and less restrictions for consumption.

Tom Kramer was quoted in *The New York Times*, [Myanmar’s Ethnic Minorities Grow Pessimistic About Peace](#), 24 March 2013

Liza ten Velde's report on organised crime in Central America was quoted in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*, [“Guerra” mexicana antinarco contagió a El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras.](#)

## The Next Quarter

In the next three months, the main issues on TNI’s Drugs & Democracy agenda will be:

- Expert Dialogue on cannabis in Uruguay. April 2013

- Seventh Annual Conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy. May 2013 in Bogota
- The [Research Consortium on Drugs and the Law \(CEDD\)](#), meeting in Bogotá, May 2013.
- Internationale Spectator - NL drugsbeleid versus internationale ontwikkelingen. In depth article by Martin Jelsma to be published shortly.
- Presentation of Chinese edition of “[Financing Dispossession – China's Opium Substitution Programme in Northern Burma](#)”, in Kunming