



Forum:	Human Rights Council
Question of:	Discussing the legalization and legitimization of Cannabis for medical purposes
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Position:	Chair, Deputy Chair

I. Description of the Issue

The legalization and legitimization of cannabis for medical purposes is a complex and multifaceted issue that has been the subject of ongoing debate and discussion in various countries and international organizations. While some nations have embraced the use of medical cannabis, others remain hesitant or outright opposed to its legalization. This issue encompasses a range of considerations, including scientific research, public health concerns, legal and regulatory frameworks, and societal attitudes.

II. Definition of Key Terms

1. **Cannabis:** A plant species that includes both hemp and marijuana, containing various chemical compounds, including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).
2. **Medical Cannabis:** The use of cannabis or its derivatives for therapeutic purposes, typically to alleviate symptoms or treat specific medical conditions.
3. **Legalization:** The process of removing legal prohibitions and allowing the cultivation, possession, and use of cannabis for medical purposes within a regulated framework.
4. **Legitimization:** The recognition and acceptance of medical cannabis as a legitimate and valid form of treatment by healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies, and society at large.

III. Background Information

Scientific Research

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing body of scientific research exploring the potential medical benefits of cannabis and its compounds, particularly cannabidiol (CBD) and



tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Studies have suggested that cannabis may have therapeutic applications in treating various conditions, including chronic pain, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy, and certain mental health disorders.

However, there are also concerns about the potential risks and side effects of cannabis use, such as cognitive impairment, respiratory issues, and the risk of addiction or dependence, particularly with long-term use or high doses of THC. Additionally, there is a need for more robust clinical trials and research to better understand the efficacy, dosing, and safety profiles of medical cannabis.

Public Health Considerations

Proponents of medical cannabis legalization argue that it can provide relief to patients suffering from various conditions and improve their quality of life. They also contend that regulated access to medical cannabis can reduce the risks associated with the illegal market and ensure product quality and safety.

On the other hand, opponents raise concerns about the potential for increased cannabis use, particularly among youth, and the potential negative impacts on public health and safety. There are also concerns about the potential for cannabis to serve as a gateway to the use of other illicit substances, although the evidence for this is inconclusive.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

The legalization and legitimization of medical cannabis require the establishment of robust legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure safe and controlled access, product quality, and responsible use. This includes regulations governing cultivation, production, distribution, and dispensing, as well as guidelines for healthcare professionals and patients.

Additionally, there are challenges in reconciling national and international laws and treaties related to drug control. The United Nations drug control conventions, while recognizing the potential medical use of cannabis, still impose strict controls on its production and distribution.

Societal Attitudes and Stigma



The debate around medical cannabis is also influenced by societal attitudes and the stigma associated with cannabis use. In many cultures, cannabis has been historically viewed as a recreational drug, and there may be resistance or skepticism towards its medical use.

Proponents argue that legitimizing medical cannabis can help destigmatize its use for therapeutic purposes and promote a more evidence-based and compassionate approach to healthcare. However, opponents may view it as a step towards broader legalization or normalization of cannabis use.

These background factors highlight the complexity of the issue and the need for a balanced and well-informed approach that considers scientific evidence, public health concerns, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes.

III.I Historical Background

Cannabis has been used for medicinal purposes for centuries in various cultures around the world. However, in the early 20th century, many countries began to criminalize its use, leading to a global prohibition on cannabis. In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in the potential medical benefits of cannabis, driven by scientific research and changing societal attitudes.

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

1. **United Nations (UN):** The UN has played a crucial role in shaping international drug policies, including those related to cannabis. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been involved in discussions and research on medical cannabis.
2. **United States:** While cannabis remains illegal at the federal level in the United States, several states have legalized its use for medical purposes, creating a complex legal landscape.
3. **Canada:** Canada legalized the use of medical cannabis in 2001 and became the second country in the world to legalize recreational cannabis in 2018.



4. European Union (EU): The EU has taken a more cautious approach, with individual member states having varying policies on medical cannabis. However, there have been efforts to harmonize regulations and facilitate research.
5. Israel: Israel has been at the forefront of medical cannabis research and has a well-established program for its use in treating various conditions.
6. International Narcotics Control Board (INCB): The INCB is a quasi-judicial body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the United Nations drug control conventions, including those related to cannabis.

V. Timeline of Events

- 1961: The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs is adopted, establishing strict controls on the production, manufacture, and distribution of narcotic drugs, including cannabis.
- 1971: The Convention on Psychotropic Substances is adopted, further regulating the use of psychoactive substances, including cannabis.
- 1998: Canada becomes one of the first countries to legalize the use of medical cannabis.
- 2001: Portugal decriminalizes the possession and consumption of all drugs, including cannabis, for personal use.
- 2012: Colorado and Washington become the first U.S. states to legalize the recreational use of cannabis.
- 2018: Canada legalizes the recreational use of cannabis nationwide.
- 2020: The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) removes cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, recognizing its potential medical benefits.
- 2022: The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends rescheduling cannabis and cannabis-related substances to facilitate research and access for medical purposes.

VI. Previous attempts to solve the issue



Efforts to legalize and legitimize cannabis for medical purposes have varied significantly across different countries and regions, each implementing unique approaches to regulation, research, and policy changes:

United States: Complex Legal Landscape

The United States has made significant attempts to legalize medical marijuana, beginning in 1996 when California passed Proposition 215 to allow its use for medicinal purposes. Since then, many states have followed suit and legalized medical marijuana, despite the fact that it is still prohibited nationally. State laws now allow for the medical use of cannabis, but federal law still considers it to be an unlawful narcotic. This has led to a complicated and sometimes contradictory legal landscape.

Canada: Regulatory Evolution

In 2001, Canada enacted the Medical Marijuana Access Regulations (MMAR), which permitted individuals to own and grow cannabis for therapeutic purposes. The Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations (ACMPR), which increased patient access to medical cannabis and streamlined procedures, changed the legislative environment in 2016. In terms of legalizing cannabis use for medical purposes, this has made Canada one of the most progressive countries in the world.

Australia: State-Level Regulation

In 2016, medicinal cannabis was made legal in Australia, though state-by-state regulations varied. The approval procedure for medicinal cannabis products is supervised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which makes sure the goods fulfill safety and efficacy requirements. Despite being decentralized, the system has made it possible for medical cannabis to be more consistently accessible in Australia.

Netherlands: Early Regulation

Cannabis laws that are progressive have long been linked to the Netherlands. Overseeing the controlled cultivation and distribution of cannabis for medical purposes, the Office of Medicinal Cannabis was founded in 2003, marking a significant advancement in the field. Providing a standard for other nations, this office makes sure that patients can obtain premium medical marijuana.



Uruguay: A First in Full Legalization

Uruguay was the first nation in the world to fully legalize cannabis in 2013, for both recreational and medical use. This brave decision, which included controlling cannabis production, distribution, and usage, is a ground-breaking illustration of how a country should address cannabis use for both medical and recreational purposes in a complete manner.

Israel: Leading in Medical Cannabis Research

With government-sponsored research on cannabis dating back to the 1960s, Israel has been a pioneer in the field worldwide. The nation has spent money on clinical studies investigating the effectiveness of cannabis in treating a range of ailments, including cancer, PTSD, and chronic pain. The amount of scientific research on the health advantages of cannabis has increased dramatically thanks in large part to Israel's initiatives.

Policy and Research Initiatives

Research and clinical studies on cannabis have increased as a result of efforts to comprehend the drug's potential medical uses. States in the US that have legalized medicinal marijuana have provided funding for studies on the drug's potential medical uses. In contrast, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has backed studies examining the medicinal advantages of cannabis, highlighting the significance of evidence-based approaches in the formulation of public policy.

International Dialogue: A Shift in Perspective

International organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have also added to the conversation over medical marijuana. Cannabis was reclassified by the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in 2020. It was previously listed as having little to no medical usefulness in Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. This reclassification is regarded as a significant step toward the medical benefit of cannabis being recognized globally.

VII. Possible solutions

1. Harmonizing International Cannabis Policies:



A significant obstacle to the legalization of medicinal cannabis is the absence of uniform global regulations and guidelines. To address concerns about usage while acknowledging the medicinal benefits of cannabis, international treaties or agreements that harmonize rules could be one way to do this. In addition to guaranteeing that patients have access to safe, regulated goods, such a framework would allow cross-border research and trading in medicinal cannabis.

2. Establishing Clear Regulatory Frameworks:

To legitimize medical cannabis, evidence-driven, science-based regulatory frameworks must be developed. Clear regulations for growing, prescribing, and distributing cannabis might be established by nations in order to guarantee product safety, standardize dosages, and stop unlawful diversion. In addition to addressing patient needs, law enforcement, and healthcare practitioners, these frameworks would maximize therapeutic benefits while preventing misuse.

3. Encouraging Research and Development:

To properly comprehend the medical applications of cannabis, more money needs to be invested in research and development. In order to give medical professionals, the comprehensive data they need to make well-informed prescribing decisions, governments and international organizations should fund clinical trials and long-term studies. Research should investigate the possible hazards of cannabis use as well as how it affects diseases including anxiety, chronic pain, and epilepsy.

4. Education and Public Awareness Campaigns:

Public education and awareness initiatives are crucial to overcoming the prejudice and false information around cannabis. These programs would assist in differentiating cannabis use for medical purposes from recreational use, fostering educated conversations about the subject. Furthermore, training programs would guarantee that medical professionals are prepared to prescribe cannabis in a safe and efficient manner.

5. Patient Access Programs and Registry Systems:

Establishing patient access programs that subsidize medical cannabis for those in need would ensure equitable access. Additionally, patient registry systems could track the efficacy and



safety of cannabis treatments, providing valuable data for further research and policy improvements.

6. International Cooperation:

Encouraging global collaboration on cannabis research and regulation can accelerate the development of best practices for its medical use. By working together, countries can create more comprehensive and effective policies, ensuring that medical cannabis is both accessible and safe for patients worldwide.

VIII. How to prepare as a delegate

In preparation for the upcoming debates, it's crucial to have a deep understanding of the issue at hand. This includes the historical context, the current situation, and potential future implications. Extensive research using reliable sources is encouraged.

Each delegate is required to write at least one draft resolution and a minimum of two, preferably three, position papers. These documents should comprehensively cover all topics of the forum and this requirement should be included in your research report.

Consider the alliances your country has with other nations and how these relationships might influence your stance on the issue. Reflect on your country's involvement in the issue. Has your country been directly affected? What actions has your country taken so far?

During your research, consider the following questions:

- What are the potential medical benefits and risks of cannabis, and how can nations develop regulations that balance these benefits with public health and safety concerns?
- How can countries support research and development into the medical applications of cannabis while ensuring access for patients and minimizing risks of misuse or addiction?
- What are the socio-economic impacts of legalizing medical cannabis, and how can regulations be structured to prevent exploitation while ensuring patient safety?



- How can healthcare providers and patients overcome challenges in accessing medical cannabis, including addressing stigma and ensuring safe, controlled use?
- What role should international organizations like the UN and WHO play in harmonizing cannabis policies across borders and in aligning national regulations with international drug control treaties?

Please note that the deadline to submit these documents is **21.09.24**. After this date, corrections or feedback will not be provided.

IX. Relevant UN Treaties and events

- 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
- 2020 UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) Decision
- World Health Organization Recommendations (2018)
- Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971)
- United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem (2016)
- The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

X. Useful links and sources

- <https://harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12954-015-0082-x>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/laws-regulations/task-force-cannabis-legalization-regulation/framework-legalization-regulation-cannabis-in-canada.html>
- <https://mediatum.ub.tum.de/doc/1690939/document.pdf>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6358421/>



- https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/5_Publikationen/Drogen_und_Sucht/Abschlussbericht/ECaLe_Technical_Report.pdf
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK224395/>

