

Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities

NEWSLETTER

July - September 2013



On July 31st the House of Representatives of [Uruguay voted in favour of the legal regulation of the domestic cannabis market](#), and in September the Obama administration decided [not to challenge the state-level legalization of recreational marijuana use](#). For the global drug policy debate in general and on cannabis in particular, the 3rd quarter of this year marks an important moment in history when the change of course became irreversible. Other highlights include the appearance of the drugs issue on the agenda of the [Colombian peace talks](#), the exploration of [options for coca export markets](#) and a possible [lifting of the ban on kratom in Thailand](#).

In place of the straitjacket of universal prohibition imposed by the UN drugs conventions, the Americas are inching towards experiments with alternative policies. That, they hope, will encourage drug policy based on evidence, rather than dogma. (The Economist, Aug 3rd, 2013)

EVENTS

TNI was present at a closed meeting of the [Global Commission on Drug Policy](#) in Geneva, 30 September/1 October. Since its start, **Martin Jelsma** has been one of the advisors of the Global Commission, chaired by former Brazilian president Cardoso. Main topic on the agenda was to outline a strategy of engagement for the Commission with regard to the preparations for the 2016 UNGASS on drugs. Other Commissioners present around the table were former presidents Gaviria (Colombia), Zedillo (Mexico) and Dreifuss (Switzerland), Kofi Annan, Richard Branson and Michel Kazatchkin.



From 24 to 26 September a forum was organised by UNDP and the Centro de Pensamiento y Seguimiento al Diálogo de Paz of the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá to discuss proposals for how to deal with the drugs issue in the peace talks between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government that are going on in Havana. The forum, with the ambitious title [National Forum about the Solution to the Problem of Illicit Drugs](#) was organised at the request of the negotiating parties and forms part of a formal

process of consultations with civil society on key topics on the peace agenda. More than 1200 people from all over the country participated in the 3-day event, including many farmers involved in the cultivation of coca, opium poppy or cannabis, drug users, representatives of indigenous peoples, health care services, human rights organisations, etcetera. **Martin Jelsma** was invited to present and participate in the discussions as one of the few invited international experts, while **Ricardo Vargas**, TNI Associate Fellow in Colombia, was a key-note speaker in the opening plenary. TNI published a special briefing paper for the occasion written by Ricardo, [Las drogas como economía de guerra y el proceso de paz en Colombia: dilemas y desafíos](#), which was widely distributed during the event.



TNI participated in the [IVth International Forum on the Coca Leaf](#)

held in La Paz, Bolivia on 14-16 August, co-hosted by de Bolivian government and civil society organisations. TNI launched during the event a [briefing paper on coca use in the north of Argentina](#), and **Martin Jelsma** gave a presentation on coca and the UN Conventions, the relevance of Bolivia's legal victory in January (the acceptance of its special reservation on coca leaf under the UN treaty), opportunities for further change in the context of the OAS process and the preparations for the 2016 UNGASS. Also, private meetings were held with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (David Choquehuanca) and Government (Carlos Romero) and several other government officials to discuss options for opening up spaces for international markets for coca leaf products, and the role TNI could play to help to make that happen. For this occasion TNI, at the request of the Bolivian Foreign Ministry, drafted a concept note to look at different coca export scenarios. A press conference was held and several interviews given (*see coverage below*). The forum was also attended by **Ricardo Abduca**, D&D consultant and the main authors of the report [Working towards a legal coca market: The case of coca leaf chewing in Argentina](#). The report was widely distributed during the event which also served as a meeting between producers, NGOs, experts and government officials.

On Wednesday 31 July, **Martin Jelsma** spoke at a closed Chatham House seminar in London on *The OAS Report on the Drug Problem in the Americas: What Next?*. Among other attendees of the event were José Miguel Insulza (OAS Secretary General), Paul Simons (head of CICAD/OAS), UNODC Deputy Director Sandeep Chawla, UK government officials and several Latin American ambassadors in London. The evening before there was [a public event](#).

The first two weeks of July, **Tom Kramer**, **Martin Jelsma** and **Ernestien Jensema** were involved in a series of activities in Myanmar/Burma. They visited Yangon and Lashio (northern Shan State) where they had planning meetings with local partners and organisations involved in drug policy (UNODC, UNAIDS, Burnet Institute, Metta Foundation, MANA, Pyoe Pin, National Drug User Network Myanmar, Asian Harm Reduction Network). An important event during the mission was the **First Southeast Asia Forum for Growers of Crops Declared to be Illicit**. The forum was organised by TNI and Paung Ku and held at Burnet Institute on 2 and 3 July. About 30 farmers and representatives of farmers from different poppy growing regions in Burma and NE India attended the meeting. Generally the government policy towards opium farmers is repressive with eradication as an important tool in an effort to enforce a ban. Aim of the forum was to identify their main concerns and formulate alternative policy options that respect the rights of producers' communities, and involve them in decision making processes.

TNI's briefing paper [Kratom in Thailand, decriminalisation and community control?](#) is feeding into the current discussions in Thailand on decriminalisation of the drug. Kratom is an indigenous tree growing in Southeast Asia. Chewing of the leaves has a mildly stimulating or narcotic effect, depending on the dose. Kratom is traditionally used, especially in Southern Thailand. Use of kratom has no adverse health consequences nevertheless kratom was included in the Thai Narcotics Act, under Schedule 5 (the least restrictive and punitive level) along with cannabis and mushrooms in 1979. Today kratom is the 4th most used drug in Thailand; over 13,000 people were arrested in 2011 for kratom related offences. The Thai Minister of Justice is advocating for decriminalisation of kratom and promoting research into the substance as a substitute for ATS. **Pascal Tanguay**, programme director of PSI inThailand and author of the TNI briefing on kratom is participating in the Thai government's legal review of the drug.

PUBLICATIONS

[Las drogas como economía de guerra y el proceso de paz en Colombia: dilemas y desafíos](#), by Ricardo vargas, Drug Policy Briefing No.41, September 2013.

[Acuerdo entre Colombia y Ecuador no suspende las fumigaciones](#), Article, by Amira Armenta,

September 12, 2013.

[Drogas y paz en Colombia](#), Article by Amira Armenta, September 9, 2013

[Uruguay Steps Forward with Marijuana Legalization Vote. Vote for Legal, Regulated Marijuana Puts Country on the Path to Historic Reform](#), WOLA and TNI Press Release, August 1st, 2013

[La regulación de la marihuana en el Uruguay. ¿Por qué un país se arriesga a ser el primero?](#) Article by Amira Armenta, July 28, 2013.

English version of [Working towards a legal coca market: The case of coca leaf chewing in Argentina](#). Drug Law Reform Series No.23, July 2013.

[Las ventajas de la regulación](#), Article by Amira Armenta, July 18, 2013

[Narcotrafic. La “guerre aux drogues” en question](#). Book published by the [Centre Tricontinental](#) (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium). Chapters on Latin America drug policy developments written by Pien Metaal, Martin Jelsma and Amira Armenta.

IN THE MEDIA

Diario del Huila (Colombia), [Qué hacer y qué no sobre la droga](#), September 30, 2013

NTR (Mexico), [Debe agenda de paz colombiana incluir nexos entre drogas y conflicto](#), September 29, 2013

El Tiempo (Colombia), [El poder de las Farc sobre 46.000 hectáreas de coca](#), September 28, 2013

Semana (Colombia), [Estas son las propuestas para La Habana sobre drogas ilícitas](#), September 26, 2013

Salon (US), [Fighting meth addiction with hard drugs](#), September 21, 2013

Global Post, [Thailand's cure for meth addiction? A leafy jungle stimulant](#), September 17, 2013

Kaos en la Red (Spain), [Que La Habana mire a La Paz](#), September 6, 2013

Jornadanet.com (Bolivia), [Jelsma: legislaciones sobre uso y consumo de droga se flexibilizaron](#), September 2, 2013

Irin News (France), [Analyse: Le combat de la Colombie contre le commerce de la coca](#), September 2, 2013 // Irin News, [Analysis: Colombia's fight against the coca trade](#), August 28, 2013

Frankfurter Rundschau (Germany), [Der Staat als Dealer](#), August 22, 2013

Fox News Latino (US), [Bolivia Touts Coca Flour As Way For Addicts To Kick Habit](#), August 21, 2013



Los Tiempos (Bolivia), [Expertos proponen alternativas para exportar productos lícitos de coca](#), August 16, 2013

El Deber (Bolivia), [Proponen uso de la coca para tratar a adictos a la cocaína](#), August 16, 2013

Opinión (Bolivia), [Plantean exportar harina de coca para tratar adictos](#), August 16, 2013

La razón (Bolivia), [Detectan acopio de coca en 8 municipios](#),

August 16, 2013

El Comercio (Ecuador), [La harina de coca, ¿una solución para los adictos?](#) August 15, 2013

El Mercurio Emol (Chile), [Bolivia inicia campaña para exportación e industrialización de la hoja de](#)

[coca](#), August 15, 2013

For more press coverage of the International Forum on coca leaf, [see this link](#)

Telesur (Venezuela), [Evo Morales inaugurará Foro Internacional de la Hoja de Coca en La Paz](#), August 14, 2013

Radio Netherlands, [El Toque: más cerca de legalizar la marihuana](#) (Entrevista a Pien Metaal), August 12, 2013

Eurasia News, [Myanmar: Will The Peace Process Materialise?](#), August 5, 2013

Espectador.com (Uruguay), [Mujica no justificará ante ONU regulación de marihuana](#), August 3, 2013

Het Parool (Dutch Newspaper), [Leren van Uruguay](#), August 3, 2013



On August 1 and 2, after the announcement of the House of Representatives of Uruguay vote in favor of legalizing cannabis, Martin Jelsma was invited by several media outlets to give statements. Among these:

- Vatican Radio, [Uruguay poised to legalize marijuana: Is this the right way forward?](#) August 2, 2013
- NOS (Dutch TV), [Nederland wietland ingehaald door](#)

Uruguay

- The Voice of Russia, [Legalization of marijuana seeks to protect teens and minor addicts from addiction - expert](#)
- El Espectador (Colombia) [Uruguay da pasos de gigante](#)
- The Christian Science Monitor (US), [Global trendsetter? Uruguay moves to legalize marijuana. \(+video\)](#)
- BBC World Service, Interview with Martin Jelsma
- RFI Radio France Internationale, Interview with Martin Jelsma

[Legalizada la marihuana en Uruguay. Primer país latinoamericano en decir SI](#), Amira Armenta in [Las2orillas](#), Colombian News Site, July 31, 2013

On July 25, D&D Colombia consultant Ricardo Vargas was invited by the [Dutch TV \(Nieuwsuur\) to talk about the coca peasants in Colombia](#).

BNR (Netherlands), [Mexico's meest gezochte drugsbaas opgepakt](#), July 16, 2013

Drug Law Reform briefing *Towards a legal market for coca leaf: the case of coca chewing in Argentina*, written by Ricardo Abduca and Pien Metaal was reproduced completely on [Bolivia Press Agency BOLPRESS](#), July 13, 2013.

UNRadio (Colombia), [UN Análisis Franja Internacional](#), July 11, 2013

Our publication [The Limits of Latitude. The UN drug control convention](#) is quoted in a municipality of Leiden (The Netherlands) paper on decision making on cannabis, about the legal obstacles to the regulation of marijuana.

Our monthly column in “Cáñamo” Magazine (Barcelona):

-Dinero del narcotráfico en los bancos. Las finanzas internacionales al servicio de la gran criminalidad. Las deficiencias en la supervisión financiera posibilitan el lavado de dinero
-La piedra en el zapato. Algunos avances en las políticas de drogas a pesar de las convenciones de la ONU

-El consumo de hoja de coca en el noroeste argentino. ¿Por qué no regular con un acuerdo bilateral la importación de la coca boliviana?

Coming up the next quarter

- OSF training program on drug policy: 4 Latin Americans will be submerged in TNI D&D expertise and experience Dutch drug policy, communication and advocacy training.
- D&D is co-organising a cannabis congress in Utrecht on October 30. More info can be found on the website [De Transparante Keten](#)
- On 31 st of October and the 1st of November we will organise an expert seminar on cannabis regulation models in Amsterdam (part of our expert seminar series within the EC NADPI project)
- In November TNI will participate in an ‘intersessional meeting’ to prepare for the March 2014 high-level segment of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna.
- In November two workshops will take place on Alternative Development, in Berlin (GIZ) and in Bangkok (GIZ/TNI), and another TNI/GIZ Southeast Asian informal drug policy dialogue will take place.
- Publications will come out on cannabis and the UN Conventions, Q&A on the UN Drug Conventions, drug trends in Southeast Asia, and drugs and violence in Rosario/Argentina.