

Summary of Drugs & Democracy Activities

NEWSLETTER

October - December 2012



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The entire South American continent is moving towards decriminalization of drug use...
Martin Jelsma

The last quarter of 2012 saw major steps in the direction of drug policy reform: In October, in [a joint statement to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#), Latin America presidents reiterated their challenge to the "war on drugs". During the Ibero American summit in November in the Spanish city of Cádiz, presidents called for [a global evaluation of current drug control policies](#). Later that month the General Assembly decided to convene a special session in early 2016 to assess "the achievements and challenges in countering the world drug problem". Also in November, voters in [Colorado and Washington states](#) supported an historic move to end marijuana prohibition. Pot legalisation in the U.S. may now further encourage Latin American shifts away from the drug war. The Uruguayan Parliament continues debating a [bill to regulate the cannabis market](#). In December the Government issued a [new text of the bill](#).

EVENTS

At the end September, [Martin Jelsma](#) participated in an expert dialogue, on strategies to reduce violence in Mexico, organized by Centro de Investigación y Docencias Económicas CIDE and Washington Office on Latin America WOLA in Aguascalientes, Mexico. He then visited Guatemala, one of the countries playing an active role in opening up the debate in the region, to discuss options for policy reform. Subsequently, at the invitation of the Uruguayan government he had numerous meetings in Montevideo to advise on the proposal to legally regulate the cannabis market. [A public lecture](#) was given by Martin Jelsma on 3 October about international experiences with drug policy alternatives, as part of a [series of conferences](#)

organized by the National Council on Drugs (Junta Nacional del Drogas) of Uruguay.

At the [Asia-Europe People's Forum \(AEPF\) in Vientiane, Laos, from 16 to 19 October 2012](#), the D&D programme organised a workshop on alternative development and crop substitution programmes in Northern Burma and Laos. TNI colleague [Kevin Woods](#) gave an overview of the programmes carried out and the results they have yielded, based on the TNI report [Financing Dispossession - China's Opium Substitution Programme in Northern Burma](#). Under the guise of opium substitution programmes the Chinese government is supporting large scale agro businesses. These programmes have very little to do with alternative development. In fact they plunder the natural resources and threaten livelihoods of local people. [Ernestien Jensema](#) presented an overview of best practices in alternative development and efforts to include the voice of the farmers in the international policy debate.

On the 8 and 9 of November, shortly before the [International Conference on Alternative Development \(ICAD\)](#) in Lima, Peru, a small group of experts, including [Pien Metaal](#), were invited by the Spanish-based [Observatory of Crops Declared Illicit \(OCDI\)](#), to discuss the draft declaration on Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, that were to be approved at the ICAD a week later. This discussion critically compared the draft with the outcome of the ICAD workshop organised by Thailand in 2011 and elaborated a list of observations on the differences in a Valencia Declaration.

On 28 November, **Martin Jelsma** participated in a [workshop](#) organised by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) and Ethics Institute of Utrecht University on the interface of human rights and international drug control.

On 29 November, [Tom Blickman](#) organised an informal drug policy platform at the TNI office to discuss developments on the cannabis pass and the 'backdoor' problem of coffeeshops in the Netherlands.

TNI financially supported and helped to organise in Bogotá a meeting on illicit cultivation on 4 December where a declaration was adopted. Representatives of civil society and peasant organisations from twelve different regions of Colombia, international NGO representatives, experts and researchers voiced their concerns about "the deterioration of the socio-economic situation, of peace and security, and environmental balance in the territories stigmatised as 'cocaleros' (coca-growing)". A 'National meeting of producers of crops declared illicit in Colombia', is scheduled for the first half of 2013 as part of the efforts to create spaces of participation for the coca growing communities.

On 5-6 December 2012, **Tom Blickman** attended the [4th Latin American Conference on Drug Policy in Bogota](#) (Colombia), organized by civil society groups *Intercambios* and *Acción Técnica Social (ATS)*, and moderated the panel about drugs and socioeconomic development. The conference gathered over 600 attendants at the Town Hall. The day before he gave a presentation on 'The international drug control institutions and their statistics' at a seminar for journalists on drug policy. Tom Blickman also participated in an informal dialogue with Latin American government officials to promote joint initiatives between governments and civil society in the region.

On 18-19 December 2012, the fourth TNI/GIZ Southeast Asia Informal Drug Policy Dialogue, chaired by [Tom Kramer](#), took place in Bangkok, with the first day focusing on "The Future of Alternative Development in Southeast Asia". The event was organised in

collaboration with the Thai Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) and discussed policy responses to shifting patterns of drug use, and legislative reform initiatives and the debate about alternative drug policy options in the region and the world. **Ernestien Jensema** provided input on ATS and harm reduction and **Martin Jelsma** contributed to the debate about alternative drug policy options and shared information on the reform initiatives in Latin America. Government officials, NGO representatives and drug policy and rural development experts from Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, Laos, China, Malaysia, India and Cambodia and from international agencies participated.

PUBLICATIONS

Briefings

In the Drugs and Conflict series, the Debate Paper No.19, *The Northern Triangle's drugs-violence nexus. The role of the drugs trade in criminal violence and policy responses in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras*, by Liza ten Velde, November 2012

In the Legislative Reform Series, Briefing No.22, *Bogotá's medical care centres for drug addicts (CAMAD). An initiative wedged between political discourse and technical action*, by Julián Quintero, November 2012

Drug Law Reform in America Latina - Country pages

These special pages on TNI's druglawreform.info website provide a unique and detailed overview of current drug control legislation and legislative reforms and proposals in Latin America. We have updated our pages of the following countries: [Argentina](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Uruguay](#)

Articles and Blogs

The Dutch 2012 election result and the coffeeshops, Tom Blickman, 4 October 2012

[*La tierra en la agenda de la paz. El primer paso podría ser ya el primer obstáculo*](#), Amira Armenta, 24 October, 2012. (Only in Spanish)

[*Portugal progresses toward integrated cannabis regulation- Proposed legislation would authorise growing for personal use and the creation of Cannabis Social Clubs*](#). Martin Barriuso Alonso (TNI collaborator), October 25

[*The impact of Alternative Development in Burma and Laos. A message from the Asia-Europe People's Forum to the International Conference on Alternative Development*](#). Ernestien Jensema, October 25, 2012

Cannabis pass abolished? Not really on the half-baked compromise in the Dutch government coalition agreement that continues the disastrous coffeeshop policy of the previous government, Tom Blickman, October 30, 2012

Cannabis pas, si cambia? Tom Blickman, November 7, 2012 (For Fuoriluogo, in Italian)

[An opportunity lost. Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and the ICAD Conference in Lima Peru](#), Pien Metaal, November 19, 2012

Drugs on the agenda of Colombian peace talks, Amira Armenta, 10 December

Articles for *Cáñamo* [magazine](#) (Barcelona – in Spanish):

- Una “aproximación mexicana” a la regulación de la marihuana, Jorge Hernández Tinajero, October 2012
 - El resultado de las elecciones holandesas y los coffee shops, Tom Blickman, November 2012
 - El cannabis y el cerebro adolescente. Amira Armenta, December 2012
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IN THE MEDIA

TNI was quoted many times by the media in this period, particularly on drug policy reforms in Latin America, for example:

[What Reforms Are Needed in Latin America's Prison Systems?](#)

Latin America Advisor newsletter, Inter-American Dialogue

[La iniciativa uruguaya para regular marihuana es sensata](#)

[Otro experto a favor de legalizar marihuana como propone Mujica](#)

[Experto cuestionó dichos de Vázquez sobre marihuana](#)

[Experto holandés sobre dichos de Vázquez: es falso que países que legalizaron la marihuana están “rebobinando”](#)

[No se puede predecir lo que va a pasar si se regula la marihuana](#)

[Marihuana: bienvenido el debate](#)

Latin America challenge the U.S. In the War against Drugs

[U.S. votes to legalize pot may encourage Latin America challenges to drug war](#)

[U.S. Marijuana vote may have snowball effect in Latin America](#)

[Biggest blow to Mexico drug cartels? It could be on your state ballot](#)

[Narco-states grope for new strategies](#)

[EU y América Latina aguardan el proceso para legalizar la marihuana](#)

[Latin America looks to Europe for drug fighting models](#)

[El nexo entre drogas y violencia en el Triángulo del Norte](#)

The Next Quarter

In the first three months of 2013 the main issues on TNI's Drugs & Democracy agenda will be:

- [Bolivia's re-accession to the 1961 Single Convention](#) with a reservation allowing traditional uses of coca leaf;
- TNI's participation in the OAS-CICAD exercise to discuss various drug policy scenarios for the American hemisphere;
- TNI's next informal drug policy dialogue in Warsaw, Poland, in February;
- And the annual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), 11-15 March.

Read all about it in our next quarterly newsletter.