Background Guide.

# What is Marijuana?

**Cannabis**, also known as **marijuana** among other names is a psychoactive drug from the Cannabis plant used for medical or recreational purposes. The main psychoactive part of cannabis is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), one of 483 known compounds in the plant including at least 65 other cannabinoids.

Marijuana has mental and physical effects, such as a general change in perception, heightened mood, and an increase in appetite. Short-term side effects may include a decrease in short-term memory, dry mouth, impaired motor skills, red eyes, and feelings of paranoia or anxiety.

**Background**

The legalization of marijuana is a topic surrounded in controversy because of its connection with drug culture and the possible medical uses of the plant. Till date, about ten nations have essentially or officially decriminalized cannabis for recreational purposes, while even more have allowed it for medical purposes. While many have decriminalized it, no nation has fully legalized marijuana. Medicinal marijuana is a multimillion dollar industry worldwide, and though the majority of marijuana production is illegal, between 15,000 and 66,000 metric tons of cannabis were produced in 2009, making it the largest drug production in the world.

Medically, the drug is legal in some countries and is used to combat cancer and other diseases. The use of marijuana provides many risks such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anxiety. Young teens are found to be more perceptible to these when using marijuana. Usage and production has increased dramatically over the years and presents a danger to society. The widespread controversy is due to the argument of whether or not possession of the drug is harmful or helpful in which it presents a worldwide legal problem. The punishment imposed by nations for the possession of marijuana varies widely between nations. In some countries, especially in Eastern Asia, a person caught with even small amounts of cannabis can be imprisoned for over ten years and even killed if it is proven that had the intention to sell the drugs. Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, such as parts of Western Europe and parts of the United States, there is little to no legal recourse for possession of small amounts of the drug for medicinal purposes and in some cases for recreational. The Netherlands and the state of Massachusetts, where possession of less than one gram of marijuana is punished with only a one hundred dollar fine.

These instances of little punishment is an example of decriminalization of marijuana, as those caught are using the drug for personal recreation, not to sell or distribute. Total legalization of the drug would allow corporations and companies to grow, sell, and advertise marijuana and marijuana related products. If legalization were to take place in any nation, copious amounts of laws and regulations would need to be put in place because of the amount of criminal activity in the current marijuana .production industry. These laws would most likely need UN assistance in placement and regulation.

**UN ACTION**

The United Nations first became involved with marijuana when it placed it on a list of illegal drugs in 1948 in an effort in the war on drugs. A report released by the UN World Drug Report in 2010 stated that there is little drug trafficking involving marijuana and instead most marijuana is grown at a local level and distributed without traveling great distances. The UN Convention on Narcotic Drugs, held in 1961, created a treaty that outlawed the production and consumption of several drugs for any reason other than medical research. This convention grouped drugs by their destructiveness, placing marijuana on the same level as heroin and amphetamines. The World Health Organization has the power to suggest that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to remove marijuana from the list of illegal drugs or downgrade its status, though to this point, the Organization has not recommended that cannabis be reevaluated.

Resolution A/RES/53/115 discusses the connections between international crime and the production of marijuana. The fact that these two topics are so closely related has been a major reason why little has been done within the UN regarding legalization or decriminalization of marijuana. The overall thought is that by condoning the use of marijuana, the international community will be condoning the actions and practices of the drug cartels and dealers that are the main suppliers of cannabis. There has been little if any acknowledgement of the practical or beneficial uses of marijuana for medicinal purposes by the United Nations, in part due to the fact that the UN does not want to validate or encourage the use of marijuana, no matter how strong the evidence of its medical benefits is. The topic of the legalization and decriminalization of marijuana is discussed in the United Nations frequently and is rarely productive in part because of nations own legal and moral standings, though there are many solutions that may be implemented in order to better the situation.

**Developments in measures regulating non-medical use of Marijuana.**

Since 2017, eight state-level jurisdictions in the United States have allowed non-medical use12 of cannabis, as well as the District of Columbia.13, 14 All those jurisdictions, except for the District of Columbia, are now licensing for-profit companies to produce, market and sell a wide range of cannabis products. All of the states that have legalized the production and sale of cannabis had prior measures allowing the medical use of cannabis. The World Drug Report 2017 looked at developments in cannabis legislation in the United States, in particular, the extent of exposure of the adult and youth populations to cannabis, as well as the interplay between the use of cannabis for recreational purposes and use for medical purposes. The present section focuses on the evidence that has become available in the State of Colorado, as it was among the first adopters of measures to allow non-medical use of cannabis in the United States. The outcomes of the legislation in terms of public health and public safety measures in Colorado are starting to emerge from the available information and are presented below, although the results have been mixed and outcomes are inconclusive. It should be pointed out that the cannabis legislation in Colorado has not been applied homogeneously across the state because the regulation allows counties and cities to opt out. Only 25 of the 64 counties in Colorado have chosen to allow some elements of recreational cannabis legislation in their jurisdictions.

**Solutions**.

Many solutions proposed in the past have not been successful due to governments! unwillingness to change their stance on the issue of any kind of drug because of moral, religious, or traditional values that the new stance may conflict with. Because of this. the closest marijuana has gotten to becoming legalized has been the legalization for medicinal purposes, though even this has come with great resistance and scrutiny. Medicinal cannabis is used for patients suffering from cancer, glaucoma, and those allergic to other kinds of painkillers, though patients are often allowed medical marijuana for ailments such as insomnia and minor pains. This has led many to assume that medical marijuana is basically decriminalization because of the ease of access to the medicinal cannabis and the lax position of many law enforcement agencies. Many also suggest that marijuana should be legalized because it is just as if not less harmful than other substances such as alcohol or cigarettes. This argument has led to much debate. though little legislation on the international level. If an agreement is to be made, a type of consolation must be made by both sides in the argument, such as the governments allowing medical marijuana on a wider basis or allowing recreational use in confined areas, such as the Netherlands’s Coffee Shops while the other side may concede to regulation on the amount allowed or how it is purchased. In some areas, it has been purposed that cannabis be used as a cash crop to replace other dying plants. or more harmful crops, such as opium. This is a solution to consider if a country deems it to be financially sound and culturally acceptable. The argument over the legalization of marijuana has become more prevalent in recent years, and its future widespread use has been predicted, though the UN will seek to control its production and decriminalization.

**Topics for Moderated Caucus**

1. Crimes related to legalization of Marijuana.
2. Merits and Demerits of legalizing Marijuana.
3. Regulation and Reforming Laws for use of legal Marijuana.

**Questions**

1. What is your country’s position on the legalization of marijuana?
2. Should marijuana be used for medicinal purposes if it is regulated?
3. Does your nation see a difference between decriminalization and legalization?
4. What should the punishment be for individuals who are caught with small amounts of marijuana?
5. Would the legalization or decriminalization of marijuana severely increase its use on a worldwide scale? If yes, then how to regulate it.
6. What can the UN do on this topic without interfering with nations own drug policies?
7. Could governments use marijuana as a revenue generator?